Steps for a Successful Web Project

Use this process for all medium- and large-scale new Web projects and Web site redesigns. This process will help keep the project on track and ensure that the right people are included in the planning, review, and approval processes.

1. **Hold a kick-off meeting with all key players**
   a. Who should be invited to the kick-off meeting?
      - Web developer lead
      - Task/project leader
      - Web team leader
      - Any technical staff that should be consulted (not specifically "reviewers" though)
      - Graphic Artist
      - Coder
      - Writer/Editor
      - Database developer/CGI Coder (if needed)
      - Possibly DOE client if needed
      - Should open meeting up to the TIU Group to ensure that all interested parties are able to participate.
      - This is an inclusive list, but use your own discretion. The point is not to invite the whole world—just the people who are key to providing insight and making decisions.
      - Make sure you review all EERE Standards and Processes first, so you can invite all necessary people to your kick-off meeting and other meetings that follow. See section "3i" below for more information and a link to the standards page.

   b. Who should lead the meeting?
      - Either the Web developer or task/project leader. This should be determined ahead of time—but the two can co-lead the meeting as well.

   c. What should be covered at the meeting?
      - Develop project scope
      - Determine project timeline and identify the steps needed and reviews required
      - Define project goals and objectives
      - Discuss the audience for the site
      - Determine project budget based on scope, timeline, review process, graphics needs, writing needs, etc. If allotted budget is not adequate for the task, start the project discussions again and determine areas or applications to cut out.
      - Determine project due date – Based on this due date, you must back-out at least 2 weeks for Q/Cs and Q/As and at least 2-4 weeks for content edits and reviews. Ensure that all involved with the editing and Q/C and Q/A process are aware of the project and aware of the due dates so they can plan accordingly.

- Determine who needs to be part of the review/approval process and who needs to be consulted/informed as the project progresses. Ensure that all technical reviewers understand their involvement in the process and understand the due dates. Creating a RACI chart would be helpful.

2. Document the meeting and the decisions made

a. Create notes from the meeting and send them to all involved in the project

b. Create a project schedule/timeline
   - Use the due date established at the meeting as a starting point
   - Back-out 2 weeks for Q/A and Q/C
   - Back out 2-4 weeks for content reviews and edits
   - Back-out enough time to adequately develop new content and get technical reviews of that content
   - Back-out graphics development time
   - The final project schedule should include details and due dates for graphics development, content development, coding, technical reviews, editorial reviews, Q/As and Q/Cs, etc. The schedule should also include the names of those responsible for each piece of the project.
   - Ensure that all people with responsibilities are given a copy of the project schedule.
   - Ensure that the task/project leader and DOE client (if necessary) are given a project schedule as well.

3. Begin Work on the Site (the following tasks may or may not apply to each individual project)

a. Interview members of the site's target audience to determine wants and needs
   - Interview candidates
   - Usability testing

b. Develop a site architecture plan
   - Determine main site sections and what pages will fall under each section.
   - Develop naming conventions for main sections and sub-pages
   - Develop written plan for site architecture
   - Get approved by project team and possibly DOE

c. Produce graphic mock-ups for main site sections
   - Send through approval process
   - Helps ensure that clients like the design before you code the entire site
   - Get graphics approved by project team

d. Develop new content for the site
   - Utilize technical writers and the communications team to help write and edit the content

e. Produce story boards of all interactive CGI tools and database applications

- Confer with CGI/database programmer
- Mock-up tool in HTML
- Forward plan to project team for approval

f. Identify linkages to other center and DOE sites
   - Plan for potential impacts on other sites
   - Determine if information overlaps and/or compliments others sites and share or link to information if possible
   - Inform other site owners that the new site is linking to them and that they should consider linking back to the new site

g. Code the pages
   - Use a coder that is familiar with all NREL and EERE standards and practices. This will ensure that pages are done correctly the first time around.
   - Ensure that the pages look good by integrating pictures or other graphical elements on the pages.

h. Edit and Review Coded Pages
   - Utilize the project team to help assess the content and the look and feel of the pages
   - Use an editor in the communications group to edit the content
   - Use a technical expert to review technical content

i. Get EERE Approval
   - There is a four-step Web development process and approval for all EERE-related Web sites. This process can be found on the EERE Web Standards site at: http://www.eere.energy.gov/communicationstandards/web/approval.html. When creating a new or redesigned EERE-related site, you must adhere to this process, which includes: Concept Development, Production, Approvals and Publishing, Maintenance and Ongoing Refinements. You must make yourself aware of this process prior to starting an EERE Web project and you must follow these guidelines. If you fail to do so, your Web site may not be approved to go live.

4. Ensure that the project stays on schedule and update the task/project leader as the project progresses

- Utilize the resources available to you to ensure that the project stays on schedule and within budget—watch cost detail reports closely! On new sites, ensure that you have an adequate plan and resources for developing new content. On site redesigns, ensure that all content is at least checked/reviewed by a qualified technical writer or engineer. Ensure links are working and coding meets all EERE standards. Keep the task/project leader informed of progress and problems along the way.

5. Tie up loose ends after the site goes live

- Officially inform the project team and the DOE client (if needed) that the site is live.
- Ensure that the new pages get indexed by the NREL Web Team so that the site will come up in EERE searches.
- Set-up a statistics profile for the site to capture usage over time. Contact Penny Rummel at ext. 3691 to set up the main URL profile and any other sub page URLs you would like to be tracked separately.
- For a site redesign, ensure that all old pages from the old site are removed from the servers and archived for historical purposes.
- Set-up “redirects” as necessary to direct people to the new site.
- Inform the FCVT or OWIP programs about the new site so they can link to this new information.
- Ensure that the sites we maintain within CTTS are linking to the new pages if appropriate.
- Inform all of CTTS of the new site – CTTS staff may be interested in learning about the new information and the site can be highlighted in Transportation Times.
- Create and store a file on the project with notes, budgets, scope, schedule, etc. so that there is a record of what transpired.